

Federal Museums Now Free for Children Under 18

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January 22, 2015



A child listening attentively to a museum guide at the Historical Museum.

Parents were given their own New Year's present over the holidays when the country's federal museums scrapped all entry fees for children under the age of 18.

The move, which many didn't notice amid the holidays, applies to both Russian and foreign children and was brought in by the Culture Ministry in late December and went into effect Jan 1.

"Our museums are the best place for historical and cultural enlightenment. The more children's faces between their walls, the better," said culture minister Vladimir Medinsky in comments posted on the ministry web site late last year. "Today they are children, as the classic says, and tomorrow they are people."

The Culture Ministry has agreed to compensate museums for lost revenue and are

encouraging local authorities to do the same for the museums under their control.

There are 62 federal museums in Russia, receiving around 30 million visitors last year, according to the ministry's web site. Some of the country's and the world's most famous museums are federal museums, including the State Hermitage, the Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts.

"We support it," said Irina Titova, the head of the All-Russian Museum of Decorative, Applied and Folk Art. "I think it is very important to attract young people. Students don't always have the money to come to the museum."

The museum expects not to lose money on the venture as the ministry is in the process of working out compensation, she said.



Vladimir Filonov / MT

Non-federal museums are also being urged to let all children in for free.

"It is an excellent idea, it means that museums will be more widely available to the population," said Anna Tshegoleva, a mother living in Moscow.

"The decision of the minister to make museums more accessible is simply a step toward what the ethos of our gallery already is," said an employee of the Tretyakov Gallery, who refused

to give her name.

"We already offered free entry to children up to age 7," said another Tretyakov Gallery employee. "And we did not charge entry every third Sunday. The gallery ethos is to be accessible to the population and to give as many people the opportunity to visit."

Entry has always been free every third Sunday of the month to the Tretyakov Gallery, but not for non-Russian citizens.

Museums under the auspices of local authorities have been urged by Medinsky to scrap their fees for children too but that seems unlikely unless they are also offered compensation.

"I don't know if we will change the admission fee for children," said Anna Klukina, director of the Moscow Darwin Zoological Museum, a popular venue for children. "We already do a lot for free, so I do not think it is necessary."

The Darwin Museum already offers free entry 26 days a year to all visitors, regardless of age or nationality.

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Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/01/22/federal-museums-now-free-for-children-under-18-a431>

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